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Emerging Security Crises and Europe's Shift to the Right

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Conservative shift, populism, nationalism have come to the fore as the main concepts for understanding recent changes in the European political landscape, which has traditionally displayed a center-left tendency. Emerging security issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis seem to have influenced Europe's sharp swing toward the right. It so happens that the right-wing coalition led by Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia) won Italy's early election held on September 25 this year, which also marks the 100th anniversary of Mussolini's founding of fascism. The recent victory of Brothers of Italy, a far-right party with roots in neo-Nazism, makes it highly possible for its leader Giorgia Meloni, known as the "female Mussolini," to become Italy's Prime Minister.

With COVID-19 still lingering and the protracted war in Ukraine exacerbating the energy crisis, Europe's shift to the right is likely to continue. Far-right politicians brandishing populist policies in response to emerging

security crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic recession, supply chain disruptions, and escalating energy costs due to the war in Ukraine may enable them to stay in power. Internally, there is an increasing concern that a right-populist wave may lead to exclusive nationalism and ultimately shake the foundation of the “one Europe” collective security system. Externally, countries worry that the right wave sweeping Europe may weaken its role as the mediator of international norms and conflicts.

As witnessed during the World Wars, history shows a record of populist politics surfacing in times of crisis. Hence, it is necessary to recognize conservative shifts as a crucial social indicator and manage such situations. Meanwhile, in the age of U.S.-China strategic competition, cooperation with like-minded countries such as Europe is indispensable for addressing emerging security issues. Therefore, the global community should pour multilateral efforts into postponing or preventing Europe’s political advance to the far-right. To this end, South Korea should enhance cooperation with Europe regarding emerging security issues to help the European political landscape thwart extreme right-wing movements and regain balance. Collaborative projects may include sharing medical information and preventive measures against emerging infectious diseases after COVID-19, along with joint

research and development for vaccines and medicines. South Korea should also enhance cooperation with European countries for offshore gas exploration and renewable energy development projects. In addition, South Korea needs to strengthen cooperative activities with Europe to maintain supply chain stability for high-tech products such as semiconductors, batteries, etc.

Keywords: Conservative Shift, Right-Wing Extremism, Brothers of Italy, Fascism, Populism, COVID-19, Russia-Ukraine War, Energy Crisis, Exclusive Nationalism